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Peaceful Coexistence Note

In a speech given by President KEKKONEN of Finland at a state dinner here in his honor November 21, reported in Pravda on November 22, Kekkonen said, "As far as I understand peaceful coexistence, which is a reality between our two countries, it means, speaking in plain language, above all the observance of tolerance and understanding on the point of view of the other side. When we act in this way, and we have in many instances done this, then ordinarily we see that our different interests can be agreed."

The communist initiate conceives of "peaceful coexistence" as the equivalent of "cold war". Khrushchev once defined it as "an economic, political, and ideological struggle but not a military struggle". On November 23, the day after it printed Kekkonen's speech, Pravda published a lead article summarizing Soviet arguments in the current ideological debate among communists themselves in which the meaning and implications of "peaceful coexistence" bulk large. The article states, "This principle does not deny class struggles, it does not mean the conciliation of socialism with capitalism, but proposes the strengthening of the struggle for the triumph of socialist ideas, for the full victory of socialism."

Those who hold the above view of "peaceful coexistence" must have received Kekkonen's interpretation with cynicism. Or, possibly, they accepted it as evidence that Soviet policies executed under the cover of "peaceful coexistence" are gaining ground in the non-communist world.

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For the broad Soviet public the phrase "peaceful coexistence" is a symbol of the Soviet regime's insistence that it follows a peace policy and has ever since Lenin. Although the Soviet public may realize that what Kekkonen says or does is not decisive in the world struggle and that "peaceful coexistence" will not acquire respectability in western vocabularies until the President of the US or leaders of other major western powers accept it, Kekkonen's readiness to use the phrase probably will be regarded as progress for the Soviet regime in the pursuit of its international goals. Even if the Soviet public regards Kekkonen's behavior as a raw exchange for Soviet concessions on substantive matters, it will be inclined to view it as significant confirmation of the claim made by the regime that Soviet "international authority" has increased and is increasing.

While the net effect of Kekkonen's remarks about "peaceful coexistence" probably has been to give the Soviets the impression that they are gaining over the West

the remarks themselves do point to a certain contradiction in the current Soviet concept of "peaceful coexistence". This contradiction arises from exploitation of the slogan among the non-initiate in its non-ideological and diplomatic sense: the absence of "cold war", relaxation of international tensions, detente, and solving difficult questions through negotiations and mutual concessions. Mutual concessions over key problems that divide the bloc from the non-communist world would sap rather than strengthen the "struggle for the full victory of socialism". This contradiction is wide open for exploitation.

THOMPSON

(ELFreers)

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